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C-O-N-F-I-D-E-N-T-I-A-L

FREE-STYLE WRITING

Adverse criticism of FDD reporting techniques has been rare and generally not well founded. However, one criticism that is worthy of study for correction has again been repeated and called to our attention.

This involves the old question in reading our reports:

"Who's talking?"

In the past we have resorted to numerous "mechanical" devices to correct vagueness in this respect -- bracketed notes, "comment" labels, or direct reference to FDD knowledge of the subject.

In the course of our development, FDD has adopted a variety of reporting methods to meet the demands of our consumers in general in order to perform efficiently within the limit of our capabilities. Now appears to be the time for another forward step.

On suggestion of a respected critic of our reports, we will now attempt reporting "in a more journalistic style." To take none of the weight from the suggestion, this idea is not new to us -- we have always wanted to do it this way, except that certain conditions prevailed against our adoption and development of this style of presentation. In fact, the style of some of our reports still must remain static.

To some of us with more writing experience than others, the "free-style" of reporting (writing) will come easy. To others, it may be difficult until the knack is acquired. It IS NOT difficult. Most of our newspapers are written in this fashion.

First, we must get the idea that we are reporters. We seek information from our sources.

Ordinarily reporters follow the fire engines to observe a fire and report the story of the fire; or, attend a court session to cover a legal case of public interest; or, interview the mayor for a story on street improvement plans. The sources for these reporters are the action itself, the police, the firemen, the lawyers, the mayor.

Our sources are foreign-language newspapers and periodicals. We scan them for items, articles, stories which apply to the requirements levied against us by the IAC. We develop our "stories" from those articles which contain important information.

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THIS DOCUMENT IS
A SOURCE REFERENCE IN
A HISTORICAL PAPER

DO NOT DESTROY

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Now we turn to write our report. How do we go about it? How do we start?

1- We know that we have a story to tell. 2- We know the outstanding facts of that story. 3- We select the most salient fact of that story as our lead. 4- We tell why this is important; why we have selected this story. 5- We tell where the story is from; the date of the fact; the date of the publication; how much space our source devoted to this yarn; any peculiarities of the source. Then we may expand, we may quote, attributing the quotation properly.

Be warned, however, that the above orderly enumeration of steps does not need to apply to each story you write. There are infinite transpositions and variations which you may employ. YOU are telling the story.

Let's report an editorial as our first example. We're going to really brief this rather lengthy one:

Characterizing the 30 November opening of a special session of the Virginia General Assembly as "of the most enormous and frightening significance" for that state's public schools, The Washington Post of 29 November in its leading half-column editorial asked for a public fight against the Gray Commission Plan.

"Fortunately, enough responsible leaders have voiced misgivings about this undigested scheme to arouse hope that the Legislature will not be stampeded," stated the Post, and continued by noting the several steps required to effect the required constitutional referendum that might give time "to arouse the people about the real issue."

The Post, which is independent politically and usually liberal in its attitude, claimed the main issue is no longer segregation vs. integration, but that of saving the public schools.

Note that we have named our source, its date of publication, date of the subject action, and the important consideration. We have quoted in full a featured statement, and paraphrased briefly as a bridge to another short quote. In conclusion, we have described the source and furnished a paraphrase of some weight.

Perhaps you would rather feature that final statement rather than the opening paragraph above? Fine! You've got something there!

Now let's take some other examples. These were selected at random from our own "press-style" reports of industrial data, and rewritten in what we are calling the "free style".

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Products of Autoparts Plant

Pistons, gears, and pins are among the important products of the Chen-hsing-t'ai Autoparts Plant, according to the Peiping Kung-jen Jih-pao of 6 April 1955. The paper gives the address of the plant, which is public-private jointly operated, as No 1303 Yen-an-hsi Lu, Shanghai.

New Passenger Ship Launched

The Chiang-hsia, a new ship designed for inland waterway passenger traffic, was launched in Shanghai on 9 April 1955, according to a report in the Peiping Kung-jen Jih-pao of 12 April. The ship can accommodate over 300 passengers, the paper says, has the most modern conveniences, and is a great over-all improvement over the SS Min-chung.

Water Turbine Produced for Miao Autonomous District

It is reported in the Peiping Kung-jen Jih-pao of 15 April 1955 that a new 34-horsepower water turbine has been produced for use in the Hsiang-hai Miao Autonomous District. The producing plant, the local state-operated Heng-yang Chien-hsiang Machinery Plant, had never made such a turbine before, the paper added, but succeeded after 5 months' research, mainly in foreign technical publications.

Note that the first sentence in each presents the salient fact of the story reported in the newspaper source. The source attribution has been fitted in at various locations in the items, and its wording is varied, to avoid monotony. Subsidiary facts can be tagged on or left out at the analyst's discretion. Comments could be inserted if desirable or when needed without the necessity of enclosing them in brackets.

This style involves taking the individual facts from the original source and rearranging them in an order calculated best to present the information in a significant manner.

Items on the same general subject can be combined under one heading, although generally this method is not applicable to the reporting of disparate "hard facts" information.

Depending on the journalistic quality of the original newspaper story, this type of re-reporting of information given in newspaper sources may involve considerable reorganization of information.

Here's another example from our material:

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The Bucharest daily newspaper lunca of 25 October 1955 criticized Cluj Regiune for its delay in harvesting and sowing. The paper noted that by 17 October the regiune had completed only 30.7 percent of planned fall sowing and 53.8 percent of planned plowing for spring sowing, and claimed that the delay is due partly to the assignment of improper sowing periods by commune executive committees and to the shortage of seed. It criticized the failure to fulfill daily norms, and gave as examples Aiud, Iudus, Bistrita, and Nesaud raions, where only 30 percent of the sowing plan has been completed.

lunca also blamed the regiune MRS service, which it claimed had completed only 48.82 percent of fall plowing and 50.1 percent of sowing by 20 October. It charged that frequent breakdowns of tractors and lack of spare parts also cause loss of time. The corn is ripe in almost all communes in the regiune, according to the paper, but Aiud Raion has harvested only 12.4 percent and Bistrita, Cluj, and Turda raions only 30 percent of the corn crops.

The article concludes by stating: "The regiune people's council knows full well that this delay is damaging next year's crops, but it has done nothing to mobilize the peasants, to intensify harvesting, plowing, and sowing. Trade union agents must exercise strict control and take immediate measures to speed up work in the fields."

When getting a story from a partisan publication, be sure to write it in such a way as to leave no doubt in the reader's mind that it is the publication which is prejudiced, not the FDD reporter. For instance:

The French "atrocities and outrages" reported committed against "innocent" natives during the recent upheavals in North Africa were laid directly at the door of an "unenlightened and evil foreign policy designed in Paris," according to the 27 November issue of the strongly nationalistic and pro-Communist Egalite. The editors of this irregularly published newspaper have frequently been connected by the French Surete with the Istiglal and the Cominform.

The article, which abounded in invective, went on to attack all French attempts at conciliation in North Africa as "vile and hypocritical attempts by a greedy imperialism at blinding the North African population to permanent enslavement, which will surely be the result if North Africa heeds the siren song from Paris."

In reporting a political story from a newspaper or periodical, keep in mind whether the paper is merely being objective in its coverage or whether it has an axe to grind, in other words, whether it is merely a neutral observer or a partisan.

As an example of reporting on an unbiased story, read the following:

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The question of whether a naval blockade against Israeli foreign trade was debated yesterday during a session of the Arab League executive board in Cairo, Egypt, according to the 29 November issue of Egypt's leading independent daily, al-Misrah. The paper cited excerpts of speeches by Ibrahim ash-Rud and Harun al-Rashid, both of whom strongly urged further sanctions, including an extension of the Arab naval blockade outside Israel's territorial waters.

Opposing this view, according to al-Misrah, was Iben Danahr, professor of history at al-Azhar University in Cairo, who was quoted as having urged "that measure of moderation and forbearance in dealing with the Israeli problem which is necessary to preserve peace in the Middle East."

And here is a good illustration of doubling up on the same subject using more than one source:

Two different articles having the same title "Is Socialism Obsolete?" appeared recently in West German periodicals. One, by Willy Eichler, member of the West German Social-Democratic Party, was in the July/August issue of the party monthly Arbeit und Freiheit published in Bonn. Eichler's article opposed the argument that improved standards of workers have made Socialism superfluous, and pointed to certain fundamental tasks with which Socialism has to deal, such as the elimination of all exploitation, the safeguarding of individual liberty, and the raising of the workers to a higher level in the cultural life of society.

The second article, written by Dr Fritz Wenzel, Member of the Bundestag, was published in the 25 August 1955 issue of the Hamburg left-wing socialist weekly Die andere Zeitung. Wenzel's article describes in detail the dangers threatening Socialism from within its ranks, such as opportunism (disguising itself as Realpolitik), revisionism and dogmatism, resignation, weariness, and the lack of faith.

Please note well that in the examples above we obviously have been reporting in our own words but generously attributing the information to the source. We have quoted when we have "lifted" verbatim (or nearly verbatim) from the original text. We have not found the use of brackets necessary.

Now here is an example or two in which the use of bracketed "Comment" is indicated as necessary because the comment comes from our own unreferenced recollection or knowledge.

Uruguay's President, Luis Batlle Berres, and Senora de Batlle Berres were entertained their first evening in Washington at a state dinner given by Vice-President and Mrs. Nixon in the Hotel Sheraton-Carlton, according to the Washington Post of 6 December 1955.

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[Comment: In the United States, the Vice-President is not given an official residence, such as the President's "White House," and consequently must entertain large official parties in the city's hotels.]

Here's another:

A T-6 training plane crashed in Minor Club Estates, a remote residential suburb of Baltimore, early today, according to The New York World Globe of 6 December 1955.

[Comment: There is no Minor Club Estates suburb of Baltimore shown on any map as recent as 1 November 1955. However, there is a well-known suburb of that name adjacent to Washington, D.C., 40 miles south of Baltimore.]

Note that we doubly ensure that our comment is labeled. We use brackets and the introductory word "Comment:

That about does it. He could not attempt to give you a pattern for every story you write. We repeat from above:

There are infinite possibilities for organization of your material and its presentation.

Just remember particularly:

Refer to your source of information.

Note directly from the source where expediency dictates, using quotation marks.

LET THE CONSUMER KNOW "WHO'S TALKING."

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